

ADAM GORROW.

THE Editor laid down the manuscript with a smile. Certainly the author of "The Distinguishing Traits of a Christian Character"—a ponderous mass of foolscap, peppered with exclamation points, quotation marks, and the blackest of black italics—and of the accompanying note (on half a sheet, and innocent of postage for an "immediate reply"), which modestly suggested for the Christian Character that it "should be run through the Magazine, and afterward issued in book form," would have been simply confounded had he seen that smile.

The wind, turning a leaf, had turned blackly into sight a paragraph of the quoted italics:

"I have no proof from the Bible that all infants are to be damned; still they can be saved only by the free grace of God, reigning through the righteousness of Christ. They are originally sinners, and deserve the curse."

Therefore the Editor had arrested the manuscript on its way to the waste-basket, and laid it down with a smile. It was a singular smile. There might have been a little indignation in it but for its studied calm; there might have been much indifference in it but for its intensity; there was neither the one nor the other; there was simply the curdled bitterness of years.

"There is one thing which has more resemblance to ourselves even than our face, and that is our physiognomy; but there is yet another thing which more resembles us than this, and that is our smile," says Victor Hugo. If Déruchette smiling was simply Déruchette, Adam Gorrow's smile then was absolutely Adam Gorrow. That was as one interpreted. There was a place where it was not. Still it was not a promising smile. As he crumpled the manuscript in his hand some words ground between his teeth; they sounded like—"Cursed cant!"

His head dropped into his hands—it was a favorite position of his; and there for an hour in the gathering shadows of the little dingy office he sat and mused.

Men like Adam Gorrow take solid comfort in such hours. A thinker and a skeptic of long, slow growth—hardly a man to be "reformed," one would fancy. Out of the fallen fancies and ruined hopes of forty-eight years he had riveted systems for himself in welded links: "*L'expérience de beaucoup d'opinions donne à l'esprit beaucoup de flexibilité et l'affermir dans celles qu'il croit les meilleures.*" He thanked Joubert for that, relishing the words as only skepticism could. The quaint old legends of Eden and Ararat, the pleasant rhythm of the Prophets, the dream of Nazareth, the superstition of the Cross—he knew them through. He had trusted them, anatomized them, recoiled from them, forgiven them. He could listen blandly, hat in hand, to the exhortations of a clergyman. He could accept a tract with graceful thanks—it was excellent to light cigars. He could stroll now and then, on comfortable Sunday mornings, into St. Somebody's to hear the music and count the audience; the sublimity

of the sense of pity was really refreshing. He was a "Liberal Thinker." He was a "large-minded man." None of your Calvin and Servetus dogmas for him. He objected to brimstone. Humanity was his study, Charity his gospel.

Accordingly, he sat there that night, rolling that sentence—the picked flaw of a mosaic, the representative of an extreme, the voice of a body of Christians who (*Laus Deo!*) are few and faint in Zion, the offshoot of a magnificent stupidity beneath the serious notice of a child—as a sweet morsel under his tongue, clustering around it the jeers of Hobbes and Voltaire, suffering it to compress the scorn and dye the bitterness of years. Had the subject been Eels instead of Eternity, would it have affected our day's marketing?

Verily it may chance that Adam Gorrow had company in the darkening, dingy office. We have heard of one who wandereth up and down upon the earth, and goeth to and fro in it. We have heard as well of one who stood in the way before Balaam and his ass. The face was shining, but the sword was drawn.

There was a curious inlet on the harbor coast, shut in by tortuous rocks—they were jagged and black; the water seethed there, and was sucked into unseen caves and crevices with a hissing sound. One house stood apart from its neighbors, facing the sea. It was a high house, and would have had a cold look—the salt of the spray having worn its paint—but for the studied brightness of the curtains and a morning-glory on the piazza trellis. There was one window down stairs from which the shades were always drawn, the sweep and tracery of muslin faint against the glass, and a pictured back-ground shifting with stereoscopic changes. The passers had a way of crossing the street to look in at that window, especially if the night were cold.

The favorite group was one of two: a woman and a baby. The room had a pretty droop of acorns on the walls and carpet, pictures, and a Clytie; a sewing-table and an open grate; ruins of block-houses; little red shoes with tagless strings, and the toes rubbed brown, thrown under the chairs; a few flowers, and a kitten. The woman and the baby used to sit by the fire; the profile of one and the pink feet of the other held out for warming were the fine points of this picture.

This was the place where Adam Gorrow's smile was not Adam Gorrow.

He stood looking in a moment that night, either because, warm with his quick walk from the horse-cars, he was in no haste to brave the sting of the night-air, or because he liked the picture. It was probably a little of both.

Yet he stood long, and the sight was pleasant. It was always pleasant, waiting just so for him when the work of the day was over; but to-night, by reason of some chill either in the air or in himself, it seemed to deepen in a

glow of color and warmth. He said something half aloud as he turned the key about its being "worth while."

A door opened softly before he was fairly in the hall. His wife always came out to meet him.

"Late to-night, Adam."

"A little—yes. I will tell you about it presently. Wolcott in yet?"

"No. I don't exactly understand; he is apt to be here by this time."

"Some college spree, probably; he will come in the course of the evening. However, I wanted the boy here early, to see about the yacht and to-morrow's fishing. Rebecca, what's the matter with your eyes? Do you expect me to be brought home, like the unfortunate little boys in the tracts who fish Sundays, my body in the cold embrace of death and my soul in brimstone? Come! Dot is growing as blue as a morning-glory out here in the cold."

He drew her in by the fire, kissing her cheek and the baby's, as was his custom. She shivered a little under his touch, and made him no reply.

He took a cigar when dinner was over, drew up his study-chair by the grate, and waited for her, watching her idly through the puffs of fragrant smoke, as she tripped about the room picking up the red shoes and the block-houses, and making ready for Dot's half-hour's "toasting" before bedtime.

She was a little woman, built like a reed. To look at the suppleness of her fingers, the veins on her forehead, the childlike curve of her lips, one would have said that a breath would sway her. Watching her eyes—they were gray and steadfast—one would think of a rock in a tempest, perhaps. There were a few lines upon her forehead: she had seen storms. Her husband's face was something different in her presence always. At the turn of her head or flutter of her dress it softened and changed. Certain expressions of his she never saw.

She came and sat down by him presently, near to the fire, hushing the baby to sleep in the golden glow, hushing and talking together. She had a pleasant voice. Her husband was apt to chat at this hour whether he had any thing to say or not, for the sake of hearing it. To-night there was something to say.

"Rebecca, here's a choice morsel for you."

He tossed over to her a bit of the crumpled manuscript.

"I staid an hour in the office masticating it; the delicate, sulphury flavor is delicious."

He watched her while she read it. Something which he expected to find in her face was probably missing, for he elevated his eyebrows with the peculiar twitch of a man who turns an unexpected corner on a windy day.

"Well?"

"Well!"

She laid down the paper with an amused little smile.

"What do you want me to say about it, Adam?"

The question seemed to irritate a little.

"What do I want you to say? I don't want any thing in particular."

"Oh!"

"Except to know, as a scientific curiosity, what you think of it."

"I think it is very funny."

He twirls his mustache discontentedly.

"You certainly have a remarkable use of adjectives, Rebecca."

"I really can't think of any other, Adam."

"But you?—you delude your poor little brain into the idea that you are one of these people. Now, I really should like to know what you do with such doctrine."

She held up the fragment of paper, twisted into a paper boat for Dot, her eyes twinkling. He bit his lip.

"But think of Dot burning for ever and ever—look at her now!—looks as if she deserved it, doesn't she?"

Poor Dot, sublimely unconscious that she was made the subject of theological discussion, was concentrating her energies of soul, mind, and body at that particular moment on a spirited endeavor to get all ten of her pink toes into her mouth at once. Mrs. Gorrow broke into a merry laugh. Her husband's eyebrows arched as if he had turned a second corner. At least he had expected to shock her. He had seen her shocked once or twice thoroughly, and had never forgotten the sight. She caught Dot up in her neck for a sudden kiss, and answered him then.

"Adam, do let us talk about something sensible. I really thought you must be joking with me. I don't know a thing—now, Adam, you know I don't, and you're just trying to tease me—about 'original sin' and 'deserving the curse,' or whether Dot is 'one of the elect.' But I know that if a little staring bundle like that, that doesn't know enough not to sit down in the fire-place and build block-houses out of the coals, has done any thing under the moon that it deserves to be punished forever and forever and forever, for there would be just as many kittens and snails in hell as there were babies, and that's all I want to know about it!"

"But this sentence is a direct quotation from an Orthodox minister in good and regular standing, Rebecca. That is what they teach."

"My minister never told me any such thing," said Mrs. Gorrow, with her childlike smile. "Besides, if he had, it would have made no difference to me. The Bible doesn't say so. It says"—she hesitated.

"What?"

"You don't like to hear about the Bible sometimes, you know, Adam. I don't like to bother you. I was going to say something about the little children that He took in His arms. How I always *did* wish that Wolcott and Dot had been there!"

She seemed to have forgotten that she was speaking aloud, her voice growing dreamy and low.

Her husband looked at her; then turned his head abruptly away. He hesitated, perhaps, to break the sweet serenity of her face, for he did not speak at once. "That a God of love could ever have created such a world on such principles of government is a moral impossibility. Look at it—torture, horror, blood, misery, slaves, prisons, gibbets, battle-fields, sickness, agony, death."

"And sin," she said.

"One long drama of misery from cradle to coffin," he continued, without noticing the interruption, "and nine-tenths of us rewarded for it with eternal torments."

"Why, I didn't know nine-tenths of the people went to hell, Adam! Who said so?"

He did not tell her; perhaps he could not recollect at the moment.

"The sufferings of brute creatures alone," he went on in the hard, set way with which he was wont to dwell on the old arguments—"why, some of the greatest thinkers of the world have based their defense of atheism on that, Rebecca. And you—why, you can not see so much as a dray-horse beaten but it haunts you for twenty-four hours. Think of the awful story of those ages before the appearance of man; a world peopled with dumb things, drowning in deluges, crushed in earthquakes, seething in volcanic fires, preying upon each other—the rocks tell the tale—living, and agonizing, and turning to dust, for what purpose? for what end? Give me the mystery of this hideous lavishness of pain! Let your Christian preachers answer if they can."

He had forgotten that his wife was there, perhaps. He did not often seek to wreck her simple faith; neither would he destroy his baby's rattle.

She looked up; a puzzled cloud which had been in her eyes while he spoke fading as one caught her full face, by reason, it seemed, of the cut of her lips—one neutralized the other.

"Adam, I don't like to think about those horrible things. I can not answer you. You argue better than I. But some things are true, Adam, after all."

She stood up a moment looking into the fire; then kissed him once, and went up with Dot to put her to bed.

She was gone some time. He leaned back in his chair with folded arms and knotted forehead, thinking.

No, she could not argue with him—the idea of Rebecca's arguing with any body! Poor little thing! It was a pretty faith of hers; he would not disturb it again. If she lost that expression of the mouth she would lose half her beauty. Besides, it suited her—the faith.

He took a fresh cigar just then, remembering against his will how it suited her, reading over the story of their married life. It had not been an easy life for her, poor child! Little more than a girl when it began, those days up in Addison came roughly to her. A drudge of a teacher on six hundred a year can not help

it if his wife does her own work all day and sits up all night with sick babies. He had not been able to help it (except, be it recorded, by taking his turn of the vigils). He had looked on, and broken his heart in looking. Then there was his trial of medicine, and chemistry, and surveying, and, he hardly liked to think what not besides, and the failures. Then that long sickness in the mountains; she never left him from beginning to end. After that the slow working into authorship and editorship, the barren uncertainty of the future, the growing, clamoring children, the pinching, the planning, the hoping, the fearing, the toiling of years.

Of late there was Wolcott. The boy had been like other college boys; no worse. But it had troubled his mother. Through the whole her face shone down on him that night as he thought it over, the same; pale, quiet, with steadfast eyes, with trustful smile. He could remember times when his manhood had broken down, when he had gone alone to groan and swear and sob, to curse the future and curse the past, and curse the fate that made him, when she had stolen in to put her arms around his neck and say, "It will all be right, Adam." Right! What had he known of right? or she? Well, what had she?

He could remember that year singled from all the years—they had loved those children. Between one spring and autumn he had stood with clenched hand three times beside a grave. It nearly killed Rebecca. He used to wake up night after night and find her in the cold on her knees. He asked her once, half savagely, what she was doing. "Bearing it," she said. If ever a fancy held reality, that was real to her. He had seen her still, white face grow rapt, her smile come like sunshine at mention of their names. She ceased after a while to go often to the spot where the poor little dust was lying; she said she thought that they came into the nursery where they used to play and heard her when she sang over her work, so she went instead and sat there. Adam Gorrow had never scoffed, he could have told you, at the "silly, pleasant notion;" he would as soon have trampled the daisies on his children's graves.

In all this time, from the hour that he had slipped her little marriage ring upon her finger, through poverty and pain, through weariness, weakness, discouragement, through days and nights in which he had come to her—and he remembered that they were not few, but many—disheartened and peevish, manlike, adding his burden to hers, through very irritation that he was powerless to relieve her of it, he had never received from her a word of petulance, an impatient look. Through it all, from first to last—on what hidden manna feeding who could tell?—she had resisted the subtle under-current of his Pantheism, keeping the simple beliefs of her childhood as purely, as unquestioningly, as she learned them at her mother's knee. On what strength stronger than his did this fragile creature lean? What love dearer than his?

What wisdom wiser? She! why she had never so much as turned a leaf of Paine; was dumb before the sentimentality of Rénan; had scarcely heard of Strauss, of Paulus, of Descartes. He could shatter her arguments as he would crush a child's cob-house with his heel. He was her husband. She loved him, as woman loves, implicitly. The wisdom of ancients, the romance of heroes, meant to her but Adam Gor-row. What, then, was this with which she had withstood him all these years? How dared she not believe the mathematics of his nicely-demonstrated theories?

Such questionings had thrust themselves into his honest home before; as he treated them that night, so he had treated them before.

He rose with a smile—his characteristic smile—threw the stump of his cigar into the grate, paced the room twice, took a book and began to read—upside down. By what he would have called "a chance" the leaf on which his eyes fell was bound upside down:

"I am ready to acknowledge that of the intellectual conception of God as Creator, Cause, Germinant Life, Lord of the Universe, etc., I am not prepared to assert or deny any thing—I know nothing. . . . If I were compelled, in intellectual gladiatorship, to surrender them all I should not feel in the smallest degree dismayed. My God is not the philosopher's God."

"Hum! honest, to be sure. Robertson was a man; there was no denying that." Exactly why the book was shut with a snap Adam Gor-row would have found it difficult to explain. At least he could have had no objection to the discovery that a man was honest? A volume of Voltaire, which he had left under a pile of magazines, served as substitute, and turning the leaves hurriedly, he read:

"Nay, further, in questions of great consequence a reasonable man will think it concerns him to remark lower probabilities and presumptions than these; such as amount to no more than showing one side of a question to be as supposable and credible as the other; nay, such as but amount to much less even than this. For numberless instances might be mentioned respecting the common pursuits of life where a man would be thought, in a literal sense, distracted who would not act, and with great application too, not only upon an even chance, but upon much less, and where the probability or chance was greatly against his succeeding."

Cheated again! The "Analogy," not Voltaire; he remembered now having taken it down for reference in that critique last night. The old argument of Butler's served him food for many a witty sarcasm and *bon mot*. Nevertheless it haunted him uneasily, like a ghost with whom he had made an unfair bargain.

Throwing the book impatiently upon the table he knocked off another, something of Rebecca's. As he stooped to pick it up, the strong gaslight fell upon the words:

"Who art thou, O man! that repliest against God?" He strode to the window, his reading finished for that night.

While he stood there drumming restlessly upon the sill, and looking out to the low line of surf that wavered through the blackness, a sharp ring at the door pealed through the house,

and his wife came in a moment after with a letter.

"From Wolcott. If he should be sick? I'm afraid—"

She went to the light, standing with her back to her husband, reading.

"What is it?"

She made him no reply.

"What is it, Rebecca?"

She read on in silence. She read through in silence; dropped slowly into a chair. He picked up the paper from the carpet where it had fallen: he read it twice, he read it three times, gathering its meaning:

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—You are expecting me home as usual to spend Sunday, and I have hardly the heart to tell you that you must expect in vain; for to-morrow, for next week, for how long, if there is any God, He only knows. When you read this I shall be on the way to California, Brazil, China—I don't know and I don't care which; somewhere out of sight and out of mind. The long and short of it is, I am expelled from college."

"I've been a wild fellow, mother, and broken your heart, and cursed myself for the drinking, and debts, and gambling, and all the rest of it. I used to be sorry for that, and hated to look at your photograph after a spree, and meant to sober down and behave myself since your last letter."

"But this thing they've kicked me out for is worse than all that—so much worse that I haven't the pluck to say it out and have it over with, and so I'm writing this nonsense like a fool, and the lines are all running crooked—something must be the matter with the lamp."

"But I suppose it's got to come."

"Twelve of us fellows—most of them wretched profligates and confirmed infidels, a few good-hearted, thoughtless chaps, who were only drunk and unwarned—went one night last week into an unfurnished room, double-locked the door, muffled the windows, and held a mock communion service."

"There! it's out now."

"Mother, upon my word I didn't know what they wanted of me. I had taken too much; when I found out what it was I hadn't the pluck to back out."

"It is only for your sake that the thought of it drives me to desperation, night after night, as I lie awake. Father won't care, of course. If he is angry at the expulsion, he can comfort himself with Emerson and the rest of those books on the lower shelf. I am so used to his way of looking at these things that it never would have seemed any thing but a rich joke to me if your face had not hung up there above all the glare and noise, like a face in a cloud, and looked—and looked—and looked."

"The thing has leaked out, nobody knows how, and I and the rest out of college with it. If I came home and saw your eyes, I believe it would drive me into lunacy. I'm off, the Fates know how or where. I am going to begin some other sort of life, and live it till you have forgotten your miserable Wolcott."

"The boy is a fool, Rebecca!"

She had no answer for him.

"Rebecca!"

He turned to see what was the matter. She was sitting just as she had sunk into the low chair, her hands dropped like the hands of the dead. The attitude did not strike him as it might at another time; he began to pace the room stormily, heedless of it.

"Such a disgrace—public expulsion! I am ashamed of him! And to crown it by that silly notion of running away—I should never have expected it of a son of mine!"

Her eyes shot out a sudden light; she half rose from her chair, her hands raised as if to gesture him away.

"Disgrace, Adam! It is not that—not that! Oh, Adam, how could he?—my little boy. And he used to kneel down with me at bedtime and fold his hands, and say—"

"Why, Rebecca!" He drew her up against his arm; she was panting like a suffocated thing. "Don't, Rebecca—don't take it to heart so! He won't do it again. He shall promise you—I will make him; he shall not make his mother look like that. That was a boyish letter; he won't go to China; he will be home again before long, and it will all be right. I will make it right. Why, Rebecca, look at me!"

But she turned away from him—her husband; for the first time for twenty years she turned from him.

"Let me go!" in a singular, sharp, lonely voice. "Let me be with God; there is nobody else to whom I can go now."

She was out of his arms before he could stop her. He listened to her slow steps up the stairs, to the balusters creaking as she clung to them for support, to her chamber door closed and locked, and her footfall overhead.

Perhaps a sense of awe crept over the man against his will. What was the mystery of this Presence which had shut her in with itself? Had she help where his strong right arm had failed her? Was there love which could be comfort unto her, and his forgotten?

He listened to the last stepping of her foot by the bedside, to the silence which fell against it; then, with a singular expression about his mouth, seized his hat and strode away to the sea.

The wind was high. It was likely to be higher yet. There was a peculiar sighing heard miles away in the unbroken blackness, low, like a mutter, and distinct all the while from the steady roar and rolling in of the breeze. It threatened storm before morning, he thought, turning his face against it; at least, a heavy swell. It was singularly dark. He could scarcely see, as he forced his way to the beach against the gusts, the outlines of the rocks. The low, irregular flash of the surf made whiteness here and there. Sky and headlands melted into common gloom.

He had spent many hours there, pacing among the shadows of the cliffs—reckless hours, anxious hours, solemn hours—but never one like this. His face, could any have seen it, would have told as much. A certain surprise was in it, which to a man of Adam Gorrows years and thinking seldom comes.

This thing had grated roughly; the disgrace of it was keen; he had been proud of the boy, as any father of his first-born. Perhaps he had looked to him to realize certain dead literary aspirations of his own—there was a little of his mother's play of fancy there to help; perhaps he had always "buildd" the child's future "better than he knew," awaking now to see

the structure dashed at his feet; it was sudden.

But beyond that?

He had just asked himself the question when he stopped his rapid pacing up and down the beach—it was moistening fast now with the spray of the incoming tide—to listen to the wind. It was a remarkable wind for that season of the year; the weight and whirl of it carried the tale of South Sea tornadoes. He began to think that it was time to be at home with Rebecca; she would be wondering what had become of him; but took a turn or two more upon the sand to answer the question.

"Well, beyond that?"

He might, yes, he might have recoiled a little at the deed itself; after all, he was capable of it; probably, out there face to face with the night and the sea, he did.

An honest blasphemer is an impossibility. There is that in the worst of us which shudders at it; bounds are set that we may not pass over; the sword, which flaming turns this way and that, guards a germ of reverence in hearts where there is little else to be guarded.

There were moments that night, while the hideous scene pictured and repictured itself before him upon wind and wave, in which he—even he—would have shrunk from the touch of his son's hand. It was as when

"Some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse,"
recoiling, awed before his own work. Adam Gorrows knew that. It was his work, and his only. Like the voice of his son's blood crying unto him from the ground, the words echoed themselves over: "Father won't care, of course." As he had sown so had he reaped; from the wind the whirlwind. Well, why should he care?

The tide was rising fast now, and he had begun to retrace his steps. The gale pelted him with flakes of foam, and blinded him with clouds of dust; gasping, he turned for breath, and puffs of dried sea-weed, with which the air was full, choked him. It was very dark. Through mist or dust or bewilderment, he could scarcely tell which, the lights along the shore seemed blotted out. Swept along like a feather before the wind, he held out his hands groping for the way. The path led up in the shade of the cliffs; it would be somewhat sheltered there. Turning to aim for it, he came sharply upon a pile of timber, left out of the track of ordinary tides, for shipping. He was thrown against it violently, and stopped with a bruise or two on the lee-side to take breath.

At that moment he tripped upon a stone and fell. At that moment also he heard a singular sound like the pressure of a battering-ram upon the timber—a creaking, a tottering, a crash—he half struggled to his feet, but they went down, he and the mass together.

How long he had lain there he never knew;

hours, perhaps. He was conscious of himself at last, wedged in, crushed, helpless, shapeless; of his own blood falling drop by drop between his lips from a log that jutted over his face; of the slight tickling of rain-drops on his forehead, where his head hung free of weight, lolling like the head of a dead man; of the roar of the surf and storm, heard dimly as the surf and storm of a dream.

He struggled with a blind instinct to free his hands, to turn his face, to escape that hideous dropping of his own blood upon his tongue. He might as well have struggled in his grave.

The low, black sky across which, through half-closed eyelids, he could see the rain tossed in gusts by the wind, weighed upon him and crowded him in with the sensation of being weighed upon and crowded in by black marble. Up far through the mist a faint glow glimmered on a headland. The gurgling of the full tide was near. He listened to it, perhaps; he looked at the glow on the headland perhaps; an idea coming to him that he had looked and listened thus for centuries, and should look and listen thus for centuries more; other than that, he had no thoughts. Time was passing.

Suddenly he felt his head raised from below. It rose, it rested; it swayed in a sickening chill; something washed against his temples with a splash. It was the tide.

Adam Gorrow began to think; only his soul and God can now know what. The glow upon the headland was sharpening to his vision; he could see what it was—the light up stairs in their own room, where he had left Rebecca on her knees. He clenched his helpless hands, and his lips grew livid at the sight. A wave swept over him then and blotted it out.

It was horrible. To lie there and listen to the sly curdle of the foam creeping in among the timber; to feel the slow rise of his incapable head, the chill and swash of the water over the mangled mass of him in the gripe of the logs, the sick swaying of the board over which his arms were pinioned back; to hear his ineffectual voice dying in faint cries, thinned and scattered by the wind, mocked by the surf, swallowed by the far roar of mid-ocean; to see through all, in flashes, that steady light upon the headland—horrible! To lie through the awful hours waiting for the slow undermining of his prison, to feel the stealthy, outgoing tide sucking it and him away; to see, perhaps, as he drifted out, a woman's shadow at the windows; to toss there, a mangled thing on which her eyes should never fall, an atom at the mercy of the storm, resolving into the elements from which he came; to howl and spin in the night and horror, one with their essence forever.

Adam Gorrow was a brave man; but his face grew ghastly in that hour. And time was passing.

Words came to him as he grew weaker—a fragment.

"What manner of man is this that even the

winds and the sea obey him?" What meaning could they have for him? Why should they seek him out? What message could he gather from them? "Unmeaning jingle;" it was odd that he should recall having said just that of them once to Wolcott; he was a little fellow then. How the boy looked! he had his mother's eyes. But the words came; whether in the shriek of winds, or the pounding of surf, or the sinister sucking of the tide, he could not tell; yet there they were, distinct to syllables like a voice within his ear: "Adam Gorrow, what manner of man is this that even the winds and sea obey him?" Curious!

Lights? Were those lights upon the shore—in the mist—waving, flickering, lost, there again?

The slow ebb was sucking at the timber. The helpless head hung, staring up at the log from which the blood was dripping.

A voice? A woman's? Great God! that she should be so near—so near: "Adam Gorrow, what manner of man is this?"

A cry rang out over the sea. The mass trembled, tottered, fell. The tide swept out a little wreck of stained and floating timber. The spot where it had stood lay smooth and wet. A star-fish, freshly tossed there, curled into the sand, and a few scarlet pebbles were scattered about.

So after all there was a future and a soul. God pity him! He had been carried by whirlwinds to a point of land across which two oceans roared and clutched at each other, and tossed him back and forth as children toss a ball; to grasp at rocks that turned to slimy weeds and feel his fingers slipping down, and grasp again and feel them slipping down.

He had spent cycles in the heart of storms, blown in simoons over scorched sands of the tropics, frozen the wastes of Siberia, moaned across the solitudes of the sea, sobbed in writhing forests, wailed through the eternal silence of the poles. He had struggled years in quicksands which were always just closing above his head; had fallen for centuries into wells that had no bottom; had lain bound forever under African suns, with the pattering of unattainable water in his ears; had spent eternities half-buried in a grave over which live men were walking, every step a thunder-clap. He had gasped, famishing for the fabled food of Tantalus, had turned the wheel of Ixion, had climbed with Sisyphus the never-ending hill. He had agonized in tombs of fire, suffocated in the Styx, spun through the blackness of darkness, where Di Rimini was wailing, trod never-ending circles to a deep below the lowest deep, with Dante looking on. He had lived through, and relived, and lived again, the horrors of De Quincey's dreams; been grinned at and chattered at by his monkeys, been fixed on the summits of his pagodas, been worshiped, been sacrificed, done the deed "at which the ibis and the crocodile trembled," been buried in his stone coffins in his "eternal pyramids," with

mummies and sphinxes, laid "confounded with all unutterable slimy things among reeds and Nilotic mud," been chased, been dogged, been confronted, been strangled and kissed by his "damned crocodile." He had undergone over and again, and yet again, the agony of 1820, paragraph by paragraph, word for word:

"The morning was come of a mighty day—a day of crisis and of final hope for human nature, then suffering some mysterious eclipse, and laboring in some dread extremity. Somewhere—he knew not where, somehow, he knew not how, by some beings he knew not whom—a battle, a strife, an agony, was conducting... 'Deeper than ever plummet sounded' he lay inactive. Then, like a chorus, the passion deepened. Some greater interest was at stake; some mightier cause than ever yet the sword had pleaded, or trumpet had proclaimed. Then came sudden alarms; hurrying to and fro; trepidations of innumerable fugitives... darkness and lights; tempest and human faces; and at last, with a sense that all was lost, female forms, and the features that were worth all the world to him, and but a moment allowed—and clasped hands, and heart-breaking partings, and then—everlasting farewells!—everlasting farewells! and again, and yet again reverberated, everlasting farewells!"

He shrieked her name out: "Rebecca, Rebecca!" and, turning, saw her.

Close beside him—close—the fire-light of their own room ebbing in tides of gold about her, her arms about his neck, her cheek to his. His thoughts narrowed themselves distinctly under her touch. He struggled to raise his head, his voice sounding to him like the voice of another man.

"Is there a chance?"

She kissed him twice, and drew her long hair down between him and the light; she would not let him see the wreck of him that lay there. He was answered.

He closed his eyes for a silent time, feeling her warm breathing on his cheek.

"Rebecca," then, "I want to see your face."

She waited, clinging to him.

"Your face, Rebecca, full in the light—so."

The poor, pitiful, pleading face! It looked down at him from its loose, neglected hair, curve and color gone, haggard lines about its mouth, its eyes only unchanged. He looked it over; he read it well.

"What do you do with your God *now*?" he asked of the pitiful face.

"I trust Him, Adam."

"Look at this thing lying here; it was your husband once. Look at it, I say! Whose work is it?"

"I trust Him, Adam."

"Where is your boy? He was your little innocent baby once, who would have gone with you into your widowed old age. Where is he? What is he? Who decreed from all eternity to make a blasphemer of your first-born son? Whose work is that?—no, you shall not turn away your face! Whose work, I say?"

Her voice quivered—yes, quivered—but her steadfast eyes were all alight.

"Adam, Adam, I trust Him!"

"Look into my eyes, Rebecca—now—do you know where I am going?"

He wrung the question out from livid lips; tore it into syllables as if an eternity hung upon it. She sat and stared at him, shivering; there was a curious, convulsive movement of her lips, like one in the last torments of the rack.

"You know where I am going. I know. He knows. He has no place in His heaven for your husband. You'll stand and sing among his fine white angels forever and forever without your husband. Whose work is *that*?"

Her voice broke into a thin, sharp cry:

"Adam, I can't help it—I can *not* help it! He's all I have. He died. He is sorry. He—"

He struggled up, drinking in her words like a famished thing, drinking in the light of her lifted eyes. Darkness swept over them then, and stillness over the words.

The darkness was shifted at last by fitful gleams of fire-light upon a wall. The stillness was broken by a baby's "coo." He lay very quietly, not caring for more than the one sight and sound for a while. It was pleasant. The rest came to him presently, as he was able. Dot in a cradle by the hearth; Rebecca busied softly about the room, with the old childlike smile; something—it was difficult to tell what—crouched in the shadow at the foot of the bed.

It was such a pretty dream! And a breath would blow away pretty dreams. It might have been minutes, or it might have been hours, before he stirred or spoke. At last, feeling a little stronger, he called her. He knew by her cry, by her eyes, that life had come. So he lay and looked at her.....

They had forgotten all else but one another perhaps. Dot had cooed herself to sleep in the cradle, and the figure in the shadow of the bed was still. It was a kneeling figure; its face was crushed down into the clothes; there were tears upon it, could any have seen them. Rebecca drew her hand from her husband's after a while, and went to it, and led it to the bed.

"It is only Wolcott, Adam. He didn't go to China. He's going to be a good boy. He is sorry."

They had left him alone, by his wish, for an hour. At the end of that time his wife stole softly in. He had been fumbling in the imperfect light with a little worn book of hers that lay upon the table. Upon certain words there was a small wet mark. He handed the book to her in his weak way, and she read:

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

"You will tell Wolcott?"

"Yes, Adam."

"Now I think I will go to sleep. Kiss me, Rebecca."